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ABSTRACT

This booklet, one in a series entitled "What Research Says to the Teacher," deals with controlling classroom misbehavior. Introductory sections deal with the definitions of classroom discipline and related research problems. Control technqieus are also mentioned, as are their effects. The bulk of the document, however, is a discussion of the ripple effect, the use of a control technique to influence behavior of other students by punishing one student as an example. (JB)

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WHAT RESEARCH SAYS TO THE TEACHER

32

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Controlling Classroom Misbehavior

William J. Gnagey

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Each pamphlet in the series is designed to serve two prime functions: to suggest principles and practical procedures that may be applied directly by the classroom teacher and to provide a springboard for further study and use of research findings.

To serve the first purpose, authors of booklets in the series select from each field those research findings that promise to be of most help to the classroom teacher. However, research has not yet provided scientifically valid findings on many aspects of teaching. In such cases, the best that can be offered is expert opinion.

It is impossible, of course, to provide a complete summary of research in any field in 32 pages. To help teachers further explore research findings, selected references are listed at the end of each booklet in the series.

The series was initiated in 1953 by the Department of Classroom Teachers (now Association of Classroom Teachers) and the American Educational Research Association under the leadership of Frank W. Hubbard, in his capacities as director of the Research Division, secretary-treasurer of the AERA, and assistant executive secretary of the NEA. Beginning in 1966, the Department of Classroom Teachers assumed full responsibility for publication of the series, with the assistance of the NEA Publications Division. One measure of the success of the series is the use of approximately two million copies of the booklets by educators in the United States and throughout the world.

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Controlling Classroom Misbehavior

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EXPLANATION

This booklet is an effort to report to classroom teachers the most important suggestions that have been produced by research for controlling classroom misbehavior. It is not a complete summary of research but a statement of some of the practical implications of research.

The interpretation and recommendations are those which the author, William J. Gnagey, professor of psychology, Illinois State University, Normal, Illinois, believes to be soundly supported by research.

The original manuscript was reviewed by Jacob S. Kounin, Department of Educational Psychology, Wayne State University, Detroit; Leon T. Ofchus, professor and chairman, Department of Psychology, State University College, Geneseo, New York; Henry E. Goebel, past president, NEA Department of Classroom Teachers; Margaret Stevenson, executive secretary, NEA Department of Classroom Teachers; and Frank W. Hubbard, retired NEA assistant executive secretary. Technical editing in terms of NEA editorial style was completed by the NEA Division of Publications.

CONTROLLING CLASSROOM MISBEHAVIOR

THE FABLED incantations of witches practicing black magic could scarcely have evoked a more dread fascination than the subject of discipline. One has but to utter this word softly in educational circles, and the cauldrons of opinion, argument, and despair begin bubbling ominously.

WHERE IS ALL THE DISCIPLINE RESEARCH?

The weight of the educational literature written in the area of discipline in the last 10 years could scarcely be hefted by the average elementary school teacher. But complete reprints of every piece of published scientific research on the subject could be carried home by any first-grade pupil. Herein lies the problem.

Focus Is a Problem

One of the reasons for this dismal condition in discipline research concerns the market basket character of the concept itself. If a student disrupts the learning experiences in a classroom, there are myriad directions a concerned teacher might take.

Is the boy emotionally upset? Do his parents belong to a non-middle-class subculture? Are his peer relations tenuous? Could he be physically sick? Are the assignments too difficult for his level of readiness? Is he displacing his negative feelings for his parents upon the teacher? Is there a personality clash between the student and the teacher? Could it be that he resents being put in the lower achievement group?

An equally long list of conjectures could be made about the effect of whatever disciplinary action a teacher might choose to quell the disruption. These could lead into such specialized areas as curriculum, developmental psychology, mental hygiene, sociology, group dynamics, or cognitive structuring. It is no

wonder the incantations have been so many and the brew so lacking in nutrition.

In some quarters it has been felt that the discipline basket would be completely empty if its misplaced ingredients were put back on their proper shelves. There would be no discipline problems, some say, if the social, emotional, and pedagogical problems were solved.

Efforts to describe and explain these outside forces that contribute to misbehavior have had at least two salutary effects. They have not only helped teachers reduce the number of deviancies that occur in their classrooms but have substantially cleared the field for a direct, unencumbered study of the relationships among the overt behaviors of the people involved in cases calling for teacher control.

We Need Some Definitions

In this review we shall limit our discussions to the confines of the classroom and the interaction of the people in that situation. In so doing we are leaving the problem of outside causation to researchers in other fields and are slipping into the shoes of every teacher who is faced with the problem of doing something on the spot when a child misbehaves.

Deviancy is the term we will use for a misbehavior. A deviancy occurs when a student takes actions which are prohibited by the teacher. Deviancies may range from whispering to a friend in the next row to striking another child. They are, however, always an infraction of an implicit or explicit set of rules enforced by the teacher.

The term *deviant* will refer to any student who commits a deviancy. This term has no reference to the number or persistence of his misbehaviors; neither has it any mental hygiene overtones. Any child becomes a deviant at the moment when he breaks one of the teacher's rules.

A *control technique* has been performed when the teacher has taken some action to put an end to the deviancy. Control techniques may be verbal or nonverbal, punitive or nonpunitive, authoritarian or persuasive; but in the context of this discussion, they are always aimed at causing a deviant to desist from his misbehavior.

Witnesses refers to classmates of the deviant who are audience to, but not targets of, the control technique performed by the teacher.

A Sample Should Help

Let us suppose that Miss Ryan is busy copying the assignment for the next day on the chalkboard of her sixth-grade classroom. For some reason unknown to her, Big Jack in the back row fires an eraser at Sweet Sue in the front row.

Let us further suppose that Miss Ryan turns around just in time to catch the culprit "red-handed." She strides menacingly back to Big Jack's desk, where she slams her book down resoundingly.

"Jack," she snaps loudly, "if you ever throw another eraser in this room, I will have the principal thrash you!"

By this time most of the other students are watching the drama with some fascination. They see Big Jack hang his head and hear him mumble apologetically, "I'm sorry, Miss Ryan. It won't happen again."

Here in a nutshell we have the elements present in every deviancy-control episode we might report. The *deviant* is Big Jack. The *deviancy* was throwing the eraser. The *control technique* was the teacher's loud threat of punishment, punctuated by the slamming of her text on Jack's desk.

Most of Jack's classmates became *witnesses* to the control technique and the deviant's response.

WHAT ARE SOME TYPES OF CONTROL TECHNIQUES?

Before discussing the implications of the findings of experimental research, we turn to descriptive research for assistance on a very practical problem: What are some control techniques that have proved effective in stopping deviancies in certain situations?

Some Strengthen Self-Control

Jane and Janice are working together on a report at the back of the room. Somehow they have gotten off the track and are conversing and giggling so loudly that many others in the class are distracted. Mr. Johnson must decide what to do.

Teachers frequently have to deal with basically well-behaved students who suffer such momentary lapses in their self-control. Several techniques have been found helpful in this type of situation.

1. *Signals* such as a finger on the lips or a "frowny" shaking of the teacher's head might be all that is required to get the girls quietly back to their report.

2. *Moving nearer* the noisy pair could remind them of the proper classroom decorum.

3. Mr. Johnson might use *humor* as a technique and remark, "I didn't know the Ladies Aid Society was meeting back there."

4. The girls' *interest might be boosted* if Mr. Johnson declared, "That's a pretty important report you're writing. May I see how it's coming along?"

5. *Diverting their attention* back to the report, the teacher might ask, "Have you thought of using the new encyclopedia to answer some of your questions?"

6. *Ignoring* the noise for a moment might be Mr. Johnson's choice of technique if he believes that the noise will soon subside by itself.

Each of these techniques has been found to be helpful in supporting a deviant's waning self-control.

Some Reduce Frustration

Since there has been established for some time a firm relationship between frustration and emotional behavior, it should not be surprising that some misbehavior can result from classroom situations in which a student cannot reach his goals.

Sam is distracting the whole arithmetic class. Not only is he making ominous sounds under his breath, but he has torn up four successive notebook sheets and crammed the remains into his desk. Miss Sims has to decide how to handle the situation.

1. Some *hurdle help* might quiet Sam down. A little of Miss Sims's time could be well spent helping Sam understand how to compute the answers to the problems that have been harassing him. When he is able to comprehend the items well enough to move on toward finishing his work, his energy can be focused on arithmetic instead of noisy distractions.

2. *Restructuring* might be the appropriate technique for Miss Sims on another day. This time the whole class seems restless and unable to get down to work. The assignment for the day is a review of the multiplication facts for the sevens, eights, and nines. In order to fulfill her objectives, Miss Sims might change the whole situation.

Instead of using the usual workbook review sheets, children could take turns being "teacher" and posing multiplication facts to the group. Any student who gets three combinations correct in a row becomes the new "teacher."

Other teachers have found that the restlessness may abruptly cease and the pupils begin learning once more.

3. As still other teachers have discovered, *temptations must be removed* far away from some pupils or deviancy is bound to be repeated. Miss Sims uses a kind of "wheel of fortune" machine for practice in number combinations. Although it serves its arithmetic functions well, students cannot seem to resist spinning it at other times. Since it emits a loud chattering sound not unlike a stick clattering along a picket fence, Miss Sims removes the temptation to a safe cupboard at the end of each class.

4. The early establishment of *routines* has been effective in reducing deviancies. Passing out papers, collecting notebooks, using the pencil sharpener, going to the lavatory: all these necessary daily activities can be breeding grounds for misbehavior. Well-established routines that are understood and practiced save teachers time and energy that must otherwise be spent in keeping order.

5. One technique that might work with Phyllis is called *painless removal.* Phyllis is a girl who very easily loses her temper. In times of stress she may stamp and shout and say things she is sorry for later. Sometimes she even strikes at some other pupil who has annoyed her.

Miss Sims must learn to step in quickly and direct Phyllis to leave the room for a time until she cools off. The principal may indicate some place in the building where she may go to "get over it." When Phyllis returns, she should have regained her composure, and the class disruption has been kept to a minimum.

6. In some rare instances the teacher may have to use *physical restraint* to prevent a badly overwrought child from hurting himself and others.

Ray was a very upset little chap. Not only was his frustration tolerance low, but he occasionally reacted to thwarting by striking out physically at almost anyone who was near. Once when he failed to get to bat in a recess ball game, Ray attacked the teammate who made the last out. Screaming a torrent of insults and obscenities, he began swinging the bat and advancing wildly upon the other boy.

Mr. Robertson wasted no time in seizing Ray from behind and disarming him with dispatch. Grasping him firmly by the arm, Robertson hauled his frothing charge to the teachers lunchroom, which was vacant at that hour.

Ray kicked, clawed, and bit like an animal, but his teacher held him firmly, picking up a bruise or two in the process. All during Ray's struggles Mr. Robertson kept telling him that as soon as he quieted down he would be released. Over and over again the teacher encouraged the tiny "wildcat" to get hold of himself and calm down. After about 10 minutes the tantrum subsided and Mr. Robertson released Ray. He had no more outbursts that week.

While this technique does nothing to reduce frustration, it does keep a child from turning violence into a major catastrophe.

7. Ideally a teacher should try to avoid unnecessary frustrations before they arise. This may sometimes be accomplished by careful *previewing* of potentially dangerous or overstimulating situations. For several years Miss Potter had taken her fifth-grade class to see a huge hydroelectric plant in operation. Since the roar of the big turbines made communication difficult, pupils had often misheard the guide's directions and had sometimes walked dangerously near some of the giant machines. Others had become so excited that they had run about shouting to one

another in a most disorganized manner. Last year the teacher seriously considered cancelling the annual trip.

In response to a suggestion by her principal, Miss Potter and her class took plenty of time before the trip to talk about the noise they would hear and the difficulties that might arise. They worked out a series of hand signals for communicating in the din and practiced using them at recess. Upon returning from the tour, Miss Potter said that it had been the best trip yet.

These seven control techniques have been cited by researchers for their effectiveness where deviancy results from classroom frustration.

Some Appeal to Understanding

Frank Carter teaches high school chemistry. The laboratory period presents a number of situations where deviancies might flourish. In one case, Larry couldn't seem to observe the safety precautions concerning the use of acids. Mr. Carter knew that something had to be done.

1. *Power with reason* is one technique that Mr. Carter could use in this situation. Saying to Larry, "You have to treat those acids with respect. You could very easily burn someone badly," might reduce this deviancy markedly.

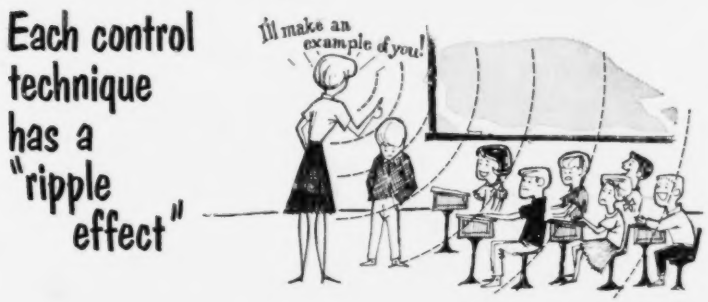
2. At another time the class came into the laboratory after an exciting class election. No one could seem to settle down to routine procedures. Mr. Carter might then use a *power with cushion* technique that directs the class to get busy but helps them recognize the cause for their behavior. "I know that you are all excited about the election, but we have to get back on the beam."

3. Once after several beakers had been broken through careless handling, Mr. Carter could have called the class together and held a *postmortem* over the breakage. After complimenting the class for the good breakage record they had compiled up to that time, he might offer constructive criticism of the careless handling techniques that had caused the recent trouble. The breakage record should then improve.

Investigators have noted that all three of these techniques are effective when an appeal to reason seems appropriate.

WHAT IS THE RIPPLE EFFECT?

The familiar declaration, "I'll make an example of you!" attests to the fact that parents and teachers have long taken the Ripple Effect for granted. They have realized that by dealing with the deviancy of one student, they were really dealing with the whole class by proxy. It is as though the effects of a control technique spread out from the deviant like concentric wavelets of influence to those classmates who are witnesses to the episode.



Since the Ripple Effect may greatly increase the number of students influenced by a control technique, each deviancy episode takes on new significance. A knowledge of the factors that produce variations in this effect are of paramount importance to the teacher who wishes to reduce the amount of deviancy in his classroom.

HOW DO TECHNIQUES INFLUENCE THE RIPPLE EFFECT?

Although we have previously taken space to describe various control techniques, we emphasized those measures that have been effective in influencing a deviant to desist. We now turn to experimental evidence concerning the impact of some of these techniques upon the Ripple Effect.

Let us agree that the major reason for performing a given control technique is to improve the learning situation. Deviancies are stimuli that may evoke responses that compete with those to be learned. It is possible, however, to use some control technique that may stop a deviancy but simultaneously increase the level of behavior disruption for all the witnesses.

The problem then becomes, "What are some characteristics of control techniques that reduce the chances that witnesses will become deviants and that will not produce unnecessary distractions from their studies?"

Threats Exert an Influence

When Miss Ryan caught Big Jack throwing the eraser, she had at least three choices as to type of control techniques: (a) She could have ignored the incident. (b) She could have issued a simple reprimand such as, "Don't do that again. Please sit down in your seat now." (c) She chose to threaten Jack in a highly agitated manner.

Research studies show that in general, highly emotional threats produce a great deal of distracting behavior-disruption among students who witness the episode. Nail-biting, shifting in seats, chewing pencils, looking around, and so forth are all behaviors that increase after a rough and threatening technique has been used.

What is even more important, these rough, emotional techniques do not lower the number of later deviancies that witnesses perform.

Additional findings indicate that a teacher's use of threatening control techniques causes witnesses to lower their estimation of his helpfulness, likeability, and fairness. His students do, however, tend to rate him higher on his ability to control a class of "tough kids." Treatment of deviancies by rough control techniques also causes the witnesses to raise their estimates of the seriousness of those infractions.

Other things being equal, Miss Ryan's choice of a rough, threatening disciplinary action probably impaired the total learning experience even though she may have succeeded in keeping Big Jack from throwing any more erasers.

Clarity Produces Results

Verbal commands such as "Hey, cut that out!" have very low clarity. They do not tell who the deviant is, what the deviancy is, or what to do to stop it.

A teacher who reacts to a disturbing noise by commanding, "Jim, stop drumming on your desk and get busy on those arithmetic problems," has performed a control technique of great clarity.

Researchers find that as a teacher increases the clarity of his verbal discipline, witnesses are less likely to become deviants. At the same time, clear control techniques do not increase behavior disruption.

Miss Ryan's declaration, "Jack, if you ever throw another eraser in this room, I will have the principal thrash you," has fairly high clarity. It indicates the deviant and identifies the deviancy in a rather exact way. It does not, however, direct Jack to an alternate, more productive behavior.

Firmness Influences Ripple

A firm control technique may have one or more of several characteristics conveying an "I mean it" quality to the teacher's action. A serious, businesslike tone of voice, walking closer to the deviant, or continuing to look at the deviant until he desists: all of these contribute firmness to a teacher's efforts at control. A bland or plaintive suggestion such as "I wish you people would pay attention," has low firmness. It may even verge on helpless entreaty.

Investigators find that increasing firmness of a control technique (as long as it does not become rough and excessively threatening) increases the conformance of both the deviant and witnesses who are oriented toward or interested in the deviancy at the time of the event.

Focus Affects Control

"I hear noise in the back of this room. Mrs. Cooper doesn't like noisy children in her room." This is one example of what researchers call an *approval-focused* control technique. It de-

pends for its effect upon the relationship between the teacher and the students.

A *task-focused* technique dealing with the same deviancy might sound like this: "I hear noise in the back of this room. We will never finish learning how to do square root if that din continues."

Findings indicate that task-focused control techniques elicit more desirable student reactions than do approval-focused efforts. Witnesses to task-focused techniques not only raise their estimates of the teacher's skill in handling children, but they gain in interest in the subject matter being taught. These effects are all superior to those noted for approval-focused attempts at control.

When students are convinced that the teacher is an expert in his subject matter, his use of task-focused control techniques causes witnesses to raise their estimates of how much he likes pupils and would be inclined to reward them. It also causes witnesses to rate the deviancy as more serious.

When the teacher combines his expertness with task-centered control techniques, witnesses learn more from the lessons and feel less inclined to misbehave.

If pupils perceive that in addition to being an expert, a teacher likes children, they react to his use of task-focused control techniques by feeling more inclined to discuss personal matters with him.

There Are Practical Implications

These research results have suggested several ways that a teacher may amplify his influence over a class by using the Ripple Effect.

1. Make use of techniques that are nonthreatening whenever possible.

2. Be sure that control communications are clear: that students know the deviant, the deviancy, and the proper alternative behavior.

3. Increase firmness by changing the tone of voice, moving closer to the deviant, or observing him closely until he complies.

4. Focus control techniques on the learning task at hand instead of contingent teacher approval.

5. As a teacher's subject matter expertness increases, so does his ability to control classroom misbehavior.

HOW DOES THE DEVIANT INFLUENCE THE RIPPLE EFFECT?

As in the previous sections, we shall confine our focus to aspects of the classroom situation. In this section we shall answer the question: "What characteristics of the deviant influence the Ripple Effect?"

The Deviant's Reaction Makes a Difference

Suppose Big Jack had responded to Miss Ryan's threat in a defiant manner instead of with the meek submission he evidenced. Would there have been any difference in the responses of his classmates?

Researchers would answer "yes" to this question. Witnesses who see a deviant submit to a teacher's control technique rate that teacher as "more capable of handling kids" than when the deviant responds in a defiant manner.

Submissive deviant responses also cause witnesses to rate the teacher as "more expert" than when deviants defy the teacher. It is as though successfully handling a deviancy increases the overall prestige of the teacher.

Classmates who witness submissive responses to control techniques judge those techniques to be fairer than do those who see deviants defy a teacher. The general feelings of the witnesses seem to parallel those acted out by the deviant.

We have agreed that a major reason for controlling deviancy is the maintenance of a good atmosphere for learning. It is interesting to note that research findings indicate that more learning takes place when deviants submit than when they respond defiantly to controls.

We could now infer that Big Jack's quiet acquiescence probably had a number of beneficial effects on Miss Ryan's class.

The Deviant's Prestige Influences Ripple

If we are to predict accurately the influence of any deviant's response, we must know something about his prestige among the witnesses. Investigators have shown that the reaction of a deviant is far more influential if his classmates hold him in high regard.

If Big Jack is *really* big in social influence in his class, his response to Miss Ryan carries a lot of weight. If Ned Nobody had been handled in the same way, the Ripple Effect of his reaction would have been minimal.

There Are Practical Applications

The following suggestions seem pertinent in making useful applications of the research findings concerning the deviant.

1. The class leaders should be located by sociometric or less formal means.
2. A study should be made of these few high-prestige people.
3. Control techniques should be developed that will cause these leaders to acquiesce.
4. If techniques are successful with a few leaders, more effective control over the entire class will be gained.

HOW DO WITNESSES INFLUENCE RIPPLE?

Thus far we have discussed two facets of the classroom situation that influence deviancy control—the control technique and the deviant. We turn now to some forces residing within the witnesses themselves. In this section we shall try to answer the question: "What witness characteristics influence the Ripple Effect?"

Motivation Affects Control

In predicting the overall effect of Miss Ryan's "Big Jack" episode, we would have to know something about the importance placed by her class on the subject she was teaching at the time.

Research evidence indicates that a deviancy episode is perceived much differently by students who are highly motivated to learn a subject than by their less interested classmates. Highly motivated students rate deviancies as more disturbing and more serious. They see control techniques as more fair and take the teacher's side in conflicts with class deviants.

Students with low motivation to learn a subject see their teacher's control techniques as angry and punitive. They describe these actions in teacher-approval-focused rather than task-focused terms.

Students' motivation also seems to influence their perception of the teacher. When asked to describe their teacher, students who are highly motivated use more task-relevant descriptions. They discuss his competence in explaining material, the quality of his homework assignments, and the like. Low-motivated students emphasize nontask teacher attributes such as fairness and other personal qualities.

Finally, students who are highly motivated to learn pay more attention to the learning task and behave themselves even better after a control technique has been performed.

Liking the Teacher May Affect Ripple

Although it is difficult to separate the influence of a student's affection for a teacher from his motivation to learn, some evidence is available. While motivation influences student reactions toward both the learning task and class deviancy, "liking for the teacher" seems to affect evaluative judgments of the teacher's behavior in a deviancy episode.

There Are Practical Implications

After examining the research findings concerning the influence of witness characteristics on the Ripple Effect, one might come to the following conclusions:

1. The more interesting a subject can be made, the more effective a teacher's control efforts become. Data from other areas indicate a lower incidence of deviancy in interesting classes. This research, however, associates interest with more efficient control of those deviancies that do occur.

2. If a teacher must choose between being liked and organizing an interesting course of study, the latter should more strongly influence her control of classroom misbehavior.

Ripple Effects May Change

All of the "ripple effect" studies were based upon students' first encounters with a new teacher. Even in the longer projects, the data were gathered from pupil-teacher interactions during the first week of school. Although it is all conjecture at this time, it seems reasonable to assume that after students become used to the way a teacher operates, control techniques may lose some of their apparent potency.

Firmness of voice, for instance, will probably lose its punch as soon as the students find out that "she doesn't really mean it" or "it's all talk." By the same token, softly spoken desist orders may cause immediate compliance and strong ripple as soon as students find out that "she means what she says" or "you can't get away with anything."

Likewise, the class may soon learn to know the attitudes that their peer leaders hold toward the teacher and may identify with these feelings regardless of any overt response they might make to any specific control effort.

If the specific control technique variables seem to diminish with time, it would be surprising if similar forces did not appear in the total atmosphere. One might be able to show the beneficial effects of a clear *atmosphere* that lacks roughness or threat.

When the rewarding or aversive consequences of certain actions in a given classroom become evident through consistent experience, the characteristics of specific cues may grow less important than the reinforcement and extinction effects cited in the next section.

CAN GOOD BEHAVIOR BE LEARNED AND UNLEARNED?

A number of psychologists have been treating misbehavior problems as special cases in faulty learning. Just as a student

may learn to type using an incorrect finger placement, so another pupil may learn social behavior that is disruptive to the classroom.

Rewards Reinforce Habits

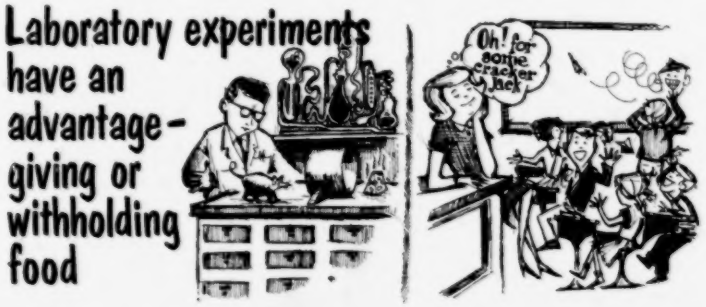
Basically, a teacher must stimulate students to perform acceptable classroom behavior and make it worth their while. Psychologists who can exert nearly complete control over their subjects' environment have brought about startling improvements in their behavior.

"Good" behavior is taught by withholding all but the minimal need gratifications until the acceptable behaviors are performed. Deviancies are ignored.

These procedures have been successful over a wide range of behavior problems, from infant toilet training to lack of cooperation among pupils of school age.

Rewards Must Be Individualized

As with so much of teaching, a generalization is only a beginning point. To say that rewarded behaviors persist, immediately raises another question: "What is rewarding to the student?"



As usual, scientists with their rats have a distinct advantage over the teacher. If rats must have food and the animal psychologist keeps it from them, he knows exactly what will reward them and reinforce their behavior—a meal. Consider the furor that would arise, however, if a teacher suggested that parents

should not feed their children before sending them to school so that "Cracker Jack" could be used to reinforce spelling skills.

Being humanitarian, educators must rely on what psychologists call *secondary* or *learned* needs to motivate learning. Events that provide affection, approval, independence, self-esteem, or self-fulfillment are often cited as rewards that may be used by teachers to reinforce preferred student behaviors. The kindergarten teacher who says, "I like the way Jimmie is sitting up straight," is doling out a piece of approval to reinforce good posture.

Can you visualize the consternation that would ensue, however, if a high school Spanish teacher used the same technique nine years later! Jimmie would be embarrassed, and his classmates would taunt him mercilessly about his goody-goody posture and about being the teacher's "fair-haired boy." The kinds of events that are rewarding depend heavily upon the developmental stage of a student.

But the veteran teacher who has worked with junior high school youngsters long enough to eliminate such "developmental mistakes" still has one more step to take. He must know what events are most rewarding to each student in his class. Only after a teacher can list a few situations that are highly pleasing to a certain student can he begin to reinforce his preferred classroom behavior efficiently.

Thorough discussion of this aspect would take us beyond the scope of this pamphlet, but our implication should be clear: teachers must find appropriate ways of rewarding students for preferred nondeviant behavior.

Unrewarded Behavior Disappears

Recent research abounds with reports of behavior improvement by means of the extinction of "bad habits." We have pointed out that good behavior is learned because it is gratifying or can be made so by the teacher. The opposite also is true.

Actions that do not bring a student closer to one or more of his goals tend to disappear. Even such violent misbehavior as a tantrum will disappear when all results that formerly made it worthwhile are withheld.

The problem is once more that the teacher, unlike the experimental psychologist, does not have complete control over a student's reinforcements. It would not have been at all surprising if Mary had brought her little lamb back to school a second day. Even though the teacher had "turned him out" the day before, the other children did "laugh and play." This would have been extremely rewarding for Mary even if it was "against the rule."

Witnesses often reinforce misbehavior (as Mary discovered)

Studies of various schedules of reinforcement show clearly that if a deviancy is reinforced even once in a while by some agent beyond the teacher's control, it may be repeated over and over again.

Miss Withers finds that Violet is the class clown in World History I. She uses every recitation as an opportunity to roll her eyes, tell jokes, and make amusing faces.

Being familiar with the principle of extinction, Miss Withers sets out to ignore completely Violet's little sideshows. She reasons that if the girl would enjoy annoying her, deliberate ignoring should make these attempts unrewarding.

Unfortunately, several members of the class are amused by Violet's antics. Her cavorting is received with many smiles and much snickering from the audience. Occasionally a classmate becomes so tickled that he bursts out in uncontrolled laughter. Violet's clowning steadily increases because it has been powerfully reinforced by her classmates.

But research on extinction clearly shows that if a teacher can arrange the classroom so that deviant behaviors are devoid of rewards, their chances of being repeated drop toward zero.

In high school, Bill had built up a long list of "locker-room" stories that kept his fellows rolling in the aisles. It was agreed among those who counted that no one could tell a shady story as well as "Old Bill."

Upon graduating, Bill enrolled at a small, church-related, liberal arts college in another state. The first semester he was crowded into a suite of dormitory rooms with five students who were studying for the ministry. In an attempt to establish himself with the group, Bill chose several occasions to tell a number of his choicest off-color jokes.

Each time, these formerly priceless gems were received by his clerical roommates with stony silence and looks of mild contempt. Within one month Bill's storytelling habit had been completely broken, never to return in that setting.

DOES PUNISHMENT IMPROVE BEHAVIOR?

So far we have avoided confronting what may be the most controversial issue in the whole area of discipline. While we have referred earlier to certain effects of threats and roughness, we have purposely waited until now to consider the effects of punishment as a control technique.

It Depends on Your Definition

First let us explain what the term *punishment* will mean in this section. We might assume that a teacher is punishing a student whenever he consciously inflicts physical or mental pain or discomfort upon that student. But there are still some fine discriminations to be made.

An important area of misunderstanding must be clarified before we proceed further. There is a substantial qualitative difference between withholding gratification and inflicting punishment. A child may be denied the privilege of going out to recess for a time because he has disobeyed safety rules and endangered the health of his classmates and himself. Obviously this will cause him some discomfort. It differs substantially, however,

from being whipped, purposely embarrassed in front of his peers, or forced to hold heavy books at arm's length until exhaustion sets in.

Punishment, as we shall use the term, also differs from *restitution*. If a pupil is made to restate a discourteous comment in a more polite fashion, we would not term it punishment, but restitution. You will remember that before a student can be expected to repeat "good" behavior, he must perform the desirable behavior and be rewarded for it.

Another example may illustrate better the "making it right" aspect of restitution. All the youngsters were talking about what a big spender Phil was. For two nights in a row he had been treating his buddies to milkshakes at the local hangout. The only trouble was that Phil's homeroom teacher, Mr. Frank, had found a $7.50 shortage in the community chest funds donated by his students.

Putting two and two together, Mr. Frank privately confronted Phil with his suspicions. After a few attempts to lie out of it, the student admitted the theft and told a heartrending tale of penury.

Mr. Frank wisely decided that he had neither the time nor the connections to check on whether Phil's story was the product of a truly substandard economic situation or a tribute to a particularly inventive imagination. He decided to make up the deficit himself and to let Phil pay back the stolen money on the installment plan. He silenced the boy's "no allowance" protest by offering him weekly car-washing and leaf-raking jobs at the going rates.

At this point Phil made a large down payment of the $2.25 that remained unspent. In three weeks the debt had been paid off and Mr. Frank congratulated Phil for the way he had stuck by his promise to make things right. He offered to let the boy continue the weekly jobs for pay—"Since you have done so well and I would just have to hire someone else anyway."

Certainly it was not fun raking leaves and washing cars for "no pay," but it is also obvious that this technique of restitution has very little in common with such punitive measures as expulsion from school, staying after school for being bad, or being sent to the juvenile detention home. Restitution, if followed by

appropriate rewards, is a very effective retraining device and not to be confused with punishment.

The punishment of which we speak here might be called retributive. When a teacher inflicts pain or discomfort on a student because the student has been "bad" and "deserves it," this is retributive punishment.

Purely retributive punishment is illustrated by the following episode. Mr. Foley, a sixth-grade teacher of physical education, was determined that all of his boys should wear their regular uniforms in every class. One Friday Bart forgot his uniform for the third time in a row.

Deciding to make an example of the forgetful boy, Mr. Foley required him to dress in a girl's uniform and to participate in full view of the others. For some time his classmates jeered at Bart and called him "sissy" names. Even the teacher was a bit taken aback when Bart burst into tears. He did, however, remember his uniform every day thereafter as long as Mr. Foley was his teacher.

When fear of re-experiencing unpleasantness becomes the major reason for a pupil's avoiding deviancy, the technique may be termed *punitive*.

Punishment Doesn't Erase Bad Habits

Researchers have shown that while punishment may suppress deviant behavior for a time, it does not weaken the bad habit. Substitute teachers abhor situations where they must teach a class that has been controlled almost exclusively by fear of punishment. As soon as the class perceives that the substitute will not punish them, deviancies appear in profusion. Their tendencies to be deviant are still there, suppressed for a time but not extinct.

Improvement May Follow Punishment

The only time when punishment is effective for eliminating a deviant habit is when a correct alternative behavior is afterward performed and reinforced. If using profanity is considered a deviancy, punishing a pupil for swearing is effective only if he

knows how to make use of other acceptable strong words that bring him the same satisfaction.

You will remember that in our discussion of *clarity* in an earlier section, we pointed out the advisability of directing a deviant to begin an acceptable behavior immediately after we have made it clear which behavior he must stop. We later pointed out that a strength of the restitution technique lay in its insistence upon a deviant's making the preferred response in place of the deviant one.

Both of these findings are based on the same phenomenon as the point we are making about punishment in the present section: Effective techniques are those that cause an individual to perform acceptable responses that can be appropriately reinforced in the classroom situation.

Punishment Is Not the Opposite of Reward

Teachers who have recently taken courses in psychology may have encountered the term *negative reinforcement*. Although the concept is a perfectly good one and well supported by research, it is often misunderstood.

Negative reinforcement takes place when a punishment stops. Whatever the child is doing just before the pain and discomfort cease will be learned and repeated in a similar circumstance. Young children actually learn to cry lustily when being punished because loud crying in the past has just preceded the end of punishment.

Francine always cried big crocodile tears whenever Miss Fulton reprimanded her. This was unusual for a fourth-grade pupil, and the teacher was determined to get at the bottom of it. A home visit revealed that whenever Francine's mother tried to discipline her, Grandma could remain silent only until the girl's tears began to flow. Time and time again, Grandma would respond to Francine's tears by taking her side against the mother and thereby terminate the discipline.

This little fourth-grade pupil had unwittingly learned that big tears caused punishment to be suspended. She had transferred this bit of conditioning that she had learned at home into Miss Fulton's classroom.

There Are Harmful Side Effects

Teachers who make generous use of punitive control techniques often defend their actions by saying, "It may not agree with the psychology books, but it works." What the teacher usually means is that the deviancy doesn't recur or spread. Research corroborates the principle that the longer the duration of a punishment, the longer the punished response will be suppressed.

But punishment works on other aspects of behavior also. Studies have shown repeatedly that organisms learn to fear the people and objects that are close to them when they are punished. In cases of repeated severe punishment, children may learn to react with fear to the teacher, the classroom, the text, and the subject. Since this reaction may spread to other teachers' classes and subjects, it can be a very high price to pay for deviancy suppression.

Virginia was one of those very quiet high school girls who puzzled Miss Clanton mightily. Although her geometry grades were passing, Virginia would never speak up in class. When asked to put a proof on the board, this student would shake her head and mumble that she did not have that one finished. On several occasions, Miss Clanton found that she not only had the problem finished, but had computed the correct answer.

Upon talking to Virginia privately, the teacher learned that freshman algebra had been a veritable nightmare for this shy student. It seemed that her teacher (who had been asked to leave at the end of the previous year) had taken delight in tricking students into expressing improper solutions in front of the class so that he could expose their ignorance and flail them with sarcasm. Several times Virginia had gone to her seat in tears. This year she had become panicky whenever she was asked to recite before the geometry class.

In a previous section, we have reported that general disruption of the learning process results from rough, threatening control techniques. It is possible that a teacher can sacrifice a great deal of learning efficiency if he insists on suppressing deviancy in a punitive manner.

Studies of creative problem solving show that as fear and anxiety rise above a certain level in a learning situation, creative

responses become minimal. A punitive disciplinarian may keep order at the cost of decreasing problem-solving ability.

We would have to conclude that if a teacher's punitive treatment of deviants was, in fact, followed by an improved learning experience, his methods of teaching must have been sufficiently interesting and rewarding to offset the effects of the punishment.

Some Practical Implications Are Clear

The results of research on reinforcement, extinction, and punishment suggest that adherence to the following principles should help improve a teacher's control of classroom misbehavior:

1. "Good," nondeviant behavior must be made gratifying.
2. Rewards must be appropriate to the developmental level and personal needs of the student.
3. If deviant behavior isn't rewarding, it will disappear by itself.
4. Restitution makes use of reinforcement and extinction to reduce deviancy.
5. Retributive punishment may suppress deviancy but does not remove the habit.
6. Punishment of a deviancy is most effective when it stimulates the deviant to act out a proper alternative that can be reinforced.
7. Retributive punishment may have several negative side effects, including fear of the learning process, behavior disruption, and diminution of creative responses to problems.

CAN A TEACHER IMPROVE HIS CONTROL OF MISBEHAVIOR?

Teachers can profit from the results of research when the general principles are translated into action. But one important reservation must be made before going on.

Mental health comes first. If one suspects that the majority of his discipline problems are due to his own emotional inadequacy or maladjustment, mental health should be his first con-

cern. To the extent that most of what a teacher does is a reflection of what he is, the results of research can be helpful mainly to those teachers whose emotional stability will allow them to grow into better disciplinarians.

Increase your repertory of techniques. Part of misbehavior control is using the right technique at the right time. Since it is true that students are individuals and react in different ways, a teacher who repeatedly uses the same few disciplinary actions may become more adequate simply by adding new techniques to his limited list.

Know your class leaders well. If it were possible to know every student well, discipline problems should decrease markedly, since it is important to know what things are reinforcing to a student before you can reward him for his good behavior.

Knowing the class leaders is of even greater importance, because of the effect that their reaction to you has on the rest of your students. If you cannot determine the identity of these influential people by inspection or conferences with other teachers who have taught the class before, then perhaps the use of a simple sociometric device is in order.

While a case study of every child may be impossible, depth studies of a few high-prestige students can pay off handsomely for the time spent.

Increase clarity and firmness. One of the simplest ways to increase the effectiveness of your control techniques is to consciously practice making them clear and firm. Remember to specify the deviant, deviancy, and alternative behavior and to follow through in a businesslike manner.

Focus on learning. If most of your prohibitions can be justified to your students on the basis of their necessity for completion of the task at hand, your control should improve. Parenthetically, if you can't justify the rules to yourself on the basis of their facilitation of learning, perhaps some of the rules should be changed.

Add interest to classwork. Being interested in your subjects is a giant step in this direction. Classroom control can be very difficult for teachers who don't like their work.

Using all that you have learned about making learning an exciting, vital experience will improve your chances of preventing many instances of misbehavior from recurring.

Substitute restitution for punishment. Although no one who has had firsthand experience teaching public school students would say that punishment should *never* be used, research studies have uncovered many harmful side effects, on both the deviant and his classmates. Since a student must perform a *desirable* behavior that must be reinforced before he will make this "good" behavior a habit, restitution has much to recommend it.

Asking a student to perform a proper behavior immediately following the deviant one will change behavior in the desired direction without producing the negative effects of punishment.

Study your own subjects. One influential force for effective control of misbehavior is expertness. If the students perceive that the teacher has a deep understanding and wide knowledge of the subjects they are to learn, his control problems diminish.

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